

MCM 375 Scriptwriting 3 credit Hours Fall 2009
Dan Rather Communications Building, Room 125
MWF 12:00-12:20

Instructor: Dr. Anthony Friedmann

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Office hours: *DRCB Room 115 M W 1.00-2.0 p.m. and T Th 11:00-11:50 am* and by appointment. You should schedule a conference about your work at least once during the semester. You are encouraged to discuss difficulties, plans, and interests in person. I will respond to email but not always on weekends and probably not so well to voice mail.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: This course emphasizes the study of style, format, principles and techniques of writing for radio, TV and film. The process of writing fiction and non-fiction will examine the development of the script from research to marketing. Prerequisite: MCM 132. Credits 3.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION: The intention of the course is to understand the difference between writing and scriptwriting, or visual writing. We learn to write not to be read but to be made into program content by a production team. This involves a shift of understanding from conventional writing of prose. We look at writing for PSA's, corporate, documentary, TV and film narrative, and interactive media. We develop a new writing skill that is specific to devising media content.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the purpose and function of a script in the production process
- To learn and understand the script terminology and abbreviations
- To learn and understand the stages of development in script writing
- To learn and understand the various script formats that are accepted in the different sectors of the media business such as film, television, radio, corporate and interactive
- To understand and practise visual writing that describes a media experience to be produced
- To stimulate and engage the creative imagination by writing concepts, treatments and scripts for various types of media

To succeed in this class, you need to read assigned chapters, use the DVD that supplements the book, and, guess what, write. We write for every class usually. You cannot get behind or you invite a train wreck. Work must be handed in on time. One class late loses a letter grade, two classes late two letter grades. Any later, forget it.

Required Texts: *Writing for Visual Media*, 2nd edition, by Anthony Friedmann (Focal Press), 2006 with accompanying DVD.

Students are expected to have the assigned textbook from day one. If you are not ready to begin the course, you are not fulfilling your responsibilities as a student. No excuses will be accepted for not being able to complete reading, do assignments, or otherwise perform in the class. There will be an assessment of performance from day one.

Attendance Policy: Attendance, being in class, is the premise on which a university course is based. Absence is not an excuse for not being prepared or not handing in assignments. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to keep up with reading and find out assignments from the syllabus, from Blackboard or from a classmate, or by emailing the instructor. Note: if you attend only part of any one day's class, you are counted one third of an absence for the full class, except in dire emergencies by prior approval. Medical appointments should be made at times other than the time the class meets. If the instructor can do it, so can you. Medical appointments do not entitle you to be absent.

There is no such thing as an excused absence. This implies that one kind of absence is better or worse than another. There are just absences. Credit for the course is based on 15 weeks of instruction as set by the accrediting body that grants the university the authority to award a degree. Credit for a course is based on performance, one component of which is attendance.

You may be absent for a maximum of 3 contact hours or one week of classes in the semester without penalty. This is not an invitation to be absent but a maximum. The fourth absence will reduce your final grade by 2.5% and again for each contact hour after that regardless of the reasons for the absences. This means that you will eventually fail the course due to poor attendance, which will negate other aspects of your performance. After 3 weeks absence, for whatever reason, a student will receive a failing grade. However, loss of grade points may induce failure before that point. You are responsible for managing your attendance. Do not miss any class for reasons other than emergencies. That is what the 3 contact hour allowance is for so that you have a reserve to cover real emergency. If you miss classes for other reasons and then have an emergency, any penalty is not for the emergency but for the absences you took prior to the emergency. An emergency does not extend your entitlement to cut class. So there are no excused or unexcused absences.

Entering a class late disturbs the class, both the instructor's teaching and the other students' learning. Class begins at the scheduled starting time and the instructor reserves the right not to admit late comers by locking the door. See www.time.gov for the correct time--the time on your watch or cell phone may not be accurate. Students not answering the roll call will be marked absent. If you are late, it is your responsibility to remind the instructor that you came in after roll call. The instructor's record is the only admissible record and will not be adjusted in retrospect. Lateness is counted a third of an absence. If you are late three times, you have earned an absence. The record of your attendance, week to week will be posted on Blackboard. Please be seated and ready to go to work by the time the class roll is called. After any absence you are responsible for all work assigned for the next class.

Since there are usually a few students in every class who are never late and never absent, it seems appropriate to reward that with a bonus grade of 2.5% of your final grade. Everybody starts with a bonus. One absence loses it. Four absences turn into a penalty. The attendance record will be posted in a dedicated column and updated weekly.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism, cheating, and/or other dishonest acts will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experience both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. See the Student Handbook for complete guidelines.

When you use a source for information, you must cite the source (check APA manual for style regarding direct quotes, etc.). Papers will be submitted to turnitin.com to check for plagiarism. Remaining in this course indicates your acceptance of the system used that incorporates the use of turnitin.com.

The minimum penalty for plagiarized work will be a zero, which may cause failure in the course. The penalty for plagiarism on a major component of the course could be an F for the course.

Exams: There may be a midterm test, and there will be a final exam on Blackboard. The final will be in a window that conforms to the university final exam schedule. The date and time of the exam for each course are determined by the Registrar. That is when the exam will be given. If a student makes an interview, appointment or any other kind of arrangement that conflict with this date and time, that problem belongs to the student. This instructor will not provide exams or tests at alternative times or make up exams. Organize your life around the published academic calendar of the university and the syllabus, or suffer the consequences, which may include not earning a passing grade.

Grading Plan: All grades are posted on Blackboard as soon as the work is graded. There is a cumulative grade showing you what you would get if you were to continue scoring the grades already registered. All assignments are not equal in weight in calculating the final grade. For this reason, an important assignment can alter the estimated course grade strongly in a positive or a negative way. The weight is indicated in the Blackboard column.

For this course, the final grade is made up in the following way (subject to modification):

Exercises 5%
PSA script 15%
Corporate Script 20%
Entertainment Script 35%
Interactive Script 10%

Final Exam 15%

Assigned work not delivered on the due date will lose a letter grade for each class day it is late. Recognize that the syllabus is plan and that the semester is a finite period of time. You may not substitute your own plan for the instructor's, or if you do, your grade will not be the same as those who follow the plan.

Additional Class Policies: All written assignments will be posted on Blackboard. All written work must be submitted electronically to the Blackboard Assignment Page in a standard format such as MS Word or a text file or a Rich Text Format. Microsoft Works is not an acceptable format. You must save work as a text file or .rtf file. Work will be returned electronically with comments and a grade. Work submitted later than the due date will be penalized a letter grade or 10 points for each class day late. All work is due as assigned; the instructor guarantees no opportunities to ever accept late work even with penalty. Students are expected to keep up with assigned reading and be prepared to answer questions in class. Bring your textbook to every class and be sure you have done all required reading by the date noted on the course outline.

According to the Student Handbook, your bible for rules of conduct at SHSU, "Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Please turn off or mute your cellular phone and/or pager before class begins. Students are prohibited from eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking among themselves at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally a directive to leave class, or being reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy."

In addition, sleeping in class, answering a cell phone or text messages, or leaving at any time, even if you return, will be considered equivalent to being late. The instructor reserves the right to remove you from the class as a disruption to the learning process. Missed lectures, daily work, exams, or quizzes, may not be made up, except as specified above for major exams. You may not use any electronic device in the classroom without specific permission from the instructor. Any electronic device (such as a cell phone, iPod, MP3 player etc.) brought to class must be turned off and stored off your desktop during class. If you want to use a laptop for taking notes, you must sit in the front row where your use of it can be monitored. Surfing, playing games or any other activity not strictly related to class work will result in your losing that privilege.

This class runs on Blackboard. All assignments will be posted on Blackboard. If you do not have a working logon id for the Sam Mail and Blackboard system, that is your problem to fix with computer services. The instructor makes all class announcements by email through the Blackboard email function. If you are unable to read that email, you will be handicapped and no allowance made for your not bothering to sort out your system communications from day one.

All written assignments will be posted on Blackboard. All written work must be submitted electronically to the Blackboard Assignment Page in a standard format such as MS Word or a text file or a Rich Text Format. Microsoft Works is not an acceptable format. You must save work as a text file or and .rtf file. Work will be returned electronically with comments and a grade. Work submitted later than the due date will be

penalized a letter grade or 10 points for each class day late. All work is due as assigned; the instructor guarantees no opportunities to ever accept late work even with penalty. Students are expected to keep up with assigned reading and be prepared to answer questions in class. Bring your textbook to every class and be sure you have done all required reading by the date noted on the course outline.

You are expected to have read assigned chapters before the day they are to be discussed in class--see outline. You must have your own textbook and bring it with you to class every day. If in-class work is assigned using your book, you will receive a zero for the work if you do not have your own text.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 8/24-28	CHAPTER 1: Describing One Medium Through Another CHAPTER 2: Describing Sight and Sound Exercise due
Week 2 8/31-9/4	CHAPTER 3: The Stages of Script Development CHAPTER 4: A Seven Step Method for Developing a Creative Concept PSA Concept
Week 3 9/9-11	Labor Day: 9/7 no classes CHAPTER 5: Ads and PSAs: Copywriting for Visual Media PSA Treatment
Week 4 9/14-18	PSA script/ Radio Treatment
Week 5 9/21-25	CHAPTER 6: Corporate Communications Radio PSA /Corporate concept
Week 6 9/28-10/2	CHAPTER 8: Documentary and Nonfiction Narrative Midterm test Corporate Script
Week 7 10/5-9	CHAPTER 9: Dramatic Structure and Form Dramatic Premise/ Expanded Premise
Week 8 10/12-16	CHAPTER 10: Writing Techniques for Long Form Scripts Dramatic Treatment/ Beat Sheet
Week 9 10/19-23	CHAPTER 11: Writing Techniques for Adaptation Dramatic script Act 1
Week 10 10/26-30	CHAPTER 12: Television Series, Sitcoms and Soaps Dramatic Script Act II
Week 11 11/2-6	Dramatic script Act III

Week 12 11/9-13	CHAPTER 13: Writing and Interactive Design Interactive Concept
Week 13 11/16-20	CHAPTER 14: Writing for Interactive Communications
Week 14 11/23	CHAPTER 15: Writing for Interactive Entertainment Thanksgiving Break 11/25-11-29
Week 15 12/30-12/4	Interactive Treatment/Design Concept/ Flowchart
Week 16 12/7-11	CHAPTER 16: You Can Get Paid to Do This
Week 17 12/14-17	Final Exams scheduled by SHSU Registrar TBA

The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus in response to developing needs or changes in equipment, circumstances, or other unforeseen events.

University Policies: Americans with Disabilities Act: According to University Policy, requests for accommodations must be initiated by the student. A student seeking accommodations should go to the Counseling Center and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in a timely manner. Every semester that the student requires accommodations, it is the student's responsibility to complete a Classroom Accommodation Request Form at the SSD office and follow the stated procedure in notifying faculty. Accommodations for disabled students are decided based upon documentation and need on a case-by-case basis by the Counseling Center.

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time

after the absence. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Q Drops: Students will be allowed no more than five Q-drops during their academic career at Sam Houston State University. Classes that are dropped prior to the Q-drop date will not count toward the limit. Students who have used their limit of five Q-drops will need to petition their respective dean to drop a class. If the dean refuses to grant permission to drop the class, the student will be required to remain in the class. This limit took effect with the start of the fall 2004 semester. Any drops accumulated prior to the fall 2004 semester will not be included in the five Q-drop limit. Neither will Q-drops from other universities. **NOTE:** A Q-drop is a drop made after the last day for tuition refunds (12th class day for fall/spring; 4th class day for summer) but before the date for which a drop would result in the grade of 'F' as published in the Academic Calendar.

IDEA Evaluations: Towards the end of the semester a formal evaluation of the course and the instructor will be administered in accordance with university policy.

Additional Information:

University Goals, as published by Sam Houston State University
Compact with Texans (click to go to this location on the SHSU site)

The Sam Houston Writing Center is currently located in Farrington 111. The Writing Center is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m., Friday from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m., and Sunday from 2 until 7 p.m. Writing tutors will work with you one-on-one to help you generate a draft, organize a draft, or revise a draft of any assignment. You can just drop by to work with a tutor or call 294-3680 to schedule and appointment.

The instructor reserves the right to make adjustments and changes to the syllabus and schedule when they are warranted in the interests of the course objectives and the responses of students.

Your decision to remain in this class is your tacit acceptance of the criteria and guidelines listed in this syllabus.